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Redevelopment Board Minutes 03/03/2008

Arlington Redevelopment Board
 Minutes of March 3, 2008

Members Present: Christopher Loreti
 Andrew West
 Edward Tsoi
 Roland Chaput
 Bruce Fitzsimmons

Also Present: Kevin J. O'Brien
 Joey Glushko
 David Berry
 Laura Wiener

Andrew West called the meeting to order at 7:04. He recognized Josh Davis, attorney for Symmes Redevelopment Associates (SRA) who explained to the Board the action it needed to take to correct errors in the deed of the Symmes property which the Board sold to Symmes Redevelopment Associates. Josh Davis and Kevin O'Brien explained that the deed which the Town received when it purchased the Symmes site from Lahey was incorrect. We then used the same deed when the Town sold the land to SRA. SRA's engineers discovered a discrepancy and have researched the deed and all surrounding deeds. Josh Davis has consulted with Town Counsel, John Maher, and together they have drafted a corrective deed to rectify the minor boundary differences. Ed Tsoi moved that the Board approve the corrective deed and authorize Chairman, Andrew West to sign the corrective deed. Chris Loreti seconded the motion and the Board voted 5 to 0 to approve.

Andrew West then asked Bruce Fitzsimmons to report on the Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting that was held February 28th.

The Board then discussed its schedule and decided it would have to meet on March 10th.

At 8:00 PM, Andrew West declared open the continued public hearing regarding the special permit sought for 1398-1406 Massachusetts Avenue. Kevin O'Brien reminded all that the Developer, Len Bierbrier was before the board to amend his special permit and also to get approval of his 100% plans for the project. The Board reviewed the plans regarding the number and location of parking spaces. Chris Loreti moved that the Board grant the permit amendment to reduce the number of parking spaces to 67 as shown on the plan. Roland Chaput seconded the motion and the Board voted 5 to 0 to approve.

Mr. Bierbrier's attorney, Dick Keshian, then asked the Board to extend the period of time for which the permit is valid. He pointed out that the permit was originally granted on December 4, 2006 and has since been amended such that this evening it is finally complete. He requested that the permit be extended such that this evening is the starting point of the two year effective term. Ed Tsoi moved that the permit be valid for two years beginning March 3, 2008. Bruce Fitzsimmons seconded the motion and the Board voted 5 to 0 to approve.

The Board then moved on to the review of the 100% plans for the new building in the development. Architect David Chilinski reported that because the Board had concerns about the building facade and signage, he was not presenting 100% drawings, but drawings for discussion. The Board discussed the doorway design, the facade design and materials, and the signage and its lighting. They agreed that the proponent should return with 100% plans when they have some tenants and can propose specifically how the building will be divided and exactly what signs will be proposed.

Laura Wiener pointed out that the Transportation Advisory Committee had suggested that pedestrians using the walkway on the left side of the building will need some protection from automobiles backing out of adjacent parking spaces. It was suggested that a guard rail or bollards would be helpful. The proponent agreed.

Andrew West then asked that Dave Berry explain the status of leasing the Crosby and Parmenter buildings. David Berry explained that among the successful bidders the Arlington Children's Center (ACC) and the International School of Boston (ISB), both located in the Parmenter School building, met the target rents, and Schools for Children (SFC) located in the Crosby School building met the minimum rent, but not the target rent. The Town Manager who has asserted his right to sign the leases has indicated that he will not sign a three year lease and has suggested a two year lease with one-year mutual option extension for the ACC and ISB and a one year lease with two one-year mutual option extensions for SFC.

Alan McClennen who has been retained by the Schools for Children argued that the ARB should sign the leases and they should be written for three years. He asserted that if the Town Meeting decides to sell the buildings the earliest sale would likely be in about three years. He suggested that if the decision is to sell the buildings, the Board may also look at a ground lease arrangement instead of an outright sale. After some discussion of these ideas, Ted Wilson of Schools for Children indicated that the uncertainty was making it very difficult to operate a \$6 million operation with 90 staff and 120 students. The situation felt very bad to him after twenty years of occupancy. He felt that at a minimum all three lease should have the same term and Schools for Children should not be singled out.

The Board decided that it should meet with the Manager and John Maher to discuss the leasing and suggested that Andrew West and Chris Loreti meet with him.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
 Kevin J. O'Brien